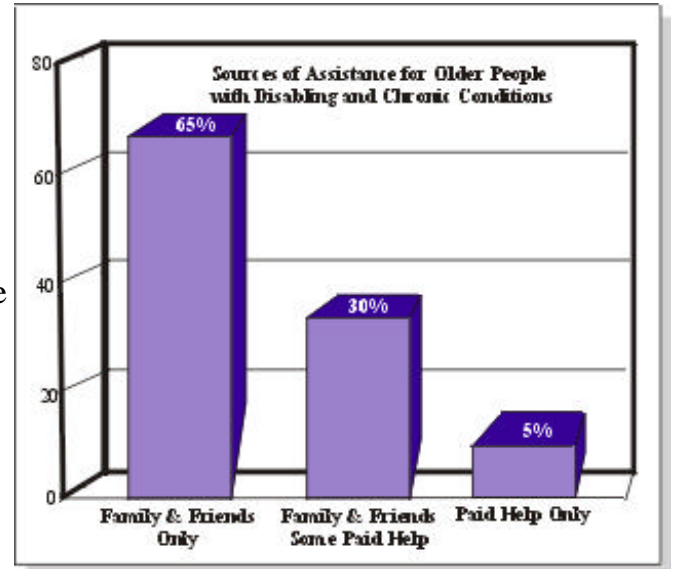


CAREGIVER SUPPORT



Informal Caregivers

According to the most recent National Long Term Care Survey (1994), more than seven million persons are informal caregivers providing unpaid help to older persons who live in the community and have at least one limitation in their activities of daily living. These caregivers include spouses, adult children, and other relatives and friends.



Of the older persons receiving paid and unpaid assistance, 95% have family and friends involved in their care. Paid home care is the exception, not the rule, for the great majority of older persons with disabilities.

The degree of caregiver involvement has remained fairly constant for more than a decade, bearing witness to the remarkable resilience of the American family in taking care of its older persons. This is despite increased geographic separation, greater numbers of women in the workforce, and other changes in family life. Thus, family caregiving has been a blessing in many respects. It has been a budget-saver to governments faced annually with the

challenge of covering the health and LTC expenses of persons who are ill and have chronic disabilities. If the work of caregivers had to be replaced by paid home care staff, the estimated cost would be \$45 – 95 billion per year.

Recognition of Caregivers

National recognition is beginning to be paid to the critical role of families in the provision of LTC. In 1993, President Clinton signed the Family and Medical Leave Act into law to ensure that businesses address the needs of their employees with regard to eldercare. In addition, every November, President Clinton has issued a formal proclamation designating the week of Thanksgiving as National Family Caregivers Week, a period set aside for the nation to honor and support the daily contributions of family caregivers.



ADMINISTRATION ON AGING

***Administrations
FY 2001 Budget
Request –
Caregiver Support***

The President's FY 2001 budget requests \$125 million in caregiver support to be funded under Title III-B of the Older Americans Act. The services these funds would support will include respite, adult day care, in-home assistance and other caregiver support services identified as needs by States and Area Agencies on Aging, as authorized by Title III-D of the Act.

Conversations with caregivers across the country have identified the following services as critical components of a caregiver support system:

- Provision of information to caregivers about available services;
- Assistance to families in gaining access to such services;
- Individual counseling, organization of support groups, and provision of caregiver training to help families make decisions and solve problems relating to their caregiving roles;
- Respite care to enable families and other informal caregivers to be temporarily relieved from their caregiving responsibilities; and
- Provision of supplemental long term care services, on a limited basis, to complement the care provided by caregivers and other informal caregivers.

***The National Aging
Network***

Under the authority of the Older Americans Act, the U.S. Administration on Aging (AoA) works closely with the national network of aging organizations to plan, coordinate, and provide home and community-based services to meet the unique needs of older persons and their caregivers. The aging network includes: AoA's Regional offices; 57 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging (AAA), 225 Tribal and native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations and two organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers.

Demands on Caregivers

The price paid by caregivers is significant. The National LTC Survey and other research have documented that:

- Caregivers dedicate on average 20 hours per week to the provision of care for older persons and even more time when the older person has multiple disabilities;
- Caring for an older person with disabilities can be physically demanding, particularly for older caregivers who make up half of all caregivers. One-third of all caregivers describe their own health as fair to poor;
- Because caregiving is such an emotionally draining experience, caregivers have a high rate of depression when compared to the general population;
- Almost one-third of all caregivers is balancing employment and caregiving responsibilities, and of this group, two-thirds report conflicts in roles that require them to rearrange their work schedules, work fewer than normal hours, and/or take unpaid leaves of absence.

The local AAA is one of the first resources a caregiver should contact when help is needed. Almost every state has one or more AAA, which serve local communities, older residents, and their families. (In a few states, the State Unit or Office on Aging serves as the AAA.) Local AAA's are generally listed in the city or county government sections of the telephone directory under "Aging" or "Social Services."

The Eldercare Locator

AoA supports a nationwide, toll free information and assistance directory called the Eldercare Locator, which can locate the appropriate AAA to help an individual needing assistance for their loved ones, relatives, or friends. Older persons and caregivers can call the Eldercare Locator toll free at 1-800-677-1116, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., Eastern Time. Eldercare Locator operators are prepared to be of help. When contacting the Locator, callers should have the address, zip code, and county of residence for the person needing assistance.

Working in close partnership with its sister agencies in the Department of Health and Human Services, the Administration on Aging provides leadership, technical assistance, and support to the national aging network of 57 State Units on Aging, 655 Area Agencies on Aging, 225 Tribal and native organizations representing 300 American Indian and Alaska Native Tribal organizations and 2 organizations serving Native Hawaiians, plus thousands of service providers, adult care centers, caregivers, and volunteers.

For more information about the Administration on Aging, please contact:

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Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116, Monday – Friday, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET